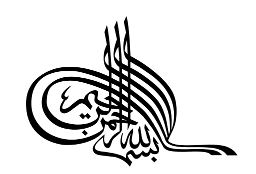


Being Like the Teacher

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May 12, 2004 / 1425 ربيع الأول 23

Gathering from the title, one might be wondering what teacher I'm referring to. The title of this article comes from Luke 6:40. Jesus (عليه السلام) explicitly said that in order for anyone to be like him, they would have to be "perfect" as he was. Insha'Allah (سبحانه وتعالى), we will examine the word "perfect" in this verse more in depth.

First, we must understand that all prophets lived according to a certain way of life which was total submission to God's Will. This means that whatever Laws, Rules, Regulations, etc., God sent to them, they abided by in 100% totality. Their message was very clear and in harmony with one another. This is also confirmed in the Qur'an:

Say ye: "We believe in Allah, and the revelation given to us, and to Abraham, Isma'il, Isaac, Jacob, and the Tribes, and that given to Moses and Jesus, and that given to (all) prophets from their Lord: We make no difference between one and another of them: And we bow to Allah (in Islam)." (Qur'an 2:136)

قُولُواْ آمنا بِاللّهِ ومآ أُنزِلَ إِلَينا وما أُنزِلَ إِلَى إِبراهِيم وإِسماعِيلَ وإِسحق ويعقُوب والأسباطِ وما أُوتِي موسى وعِيسى وما أُوتِي النِبيونَ مِن ربهم لاَ نفَرق بين أَحدٍ منهم ونحن له مسلِمونَ

The words "*we make no difference between one and another of them*" should be taken into special consideration. All those who have obeyed Allah's (سبحانه وتعالى) revelation at any time were considered a "Muslim" which literally means "One who submits" to God's Will as Allah (سبحانه وتعالى) instructed the Prophet (ﷺ) to say:

I have been commanded to be of those who submit to Allah's will (in Islam). (Qur'an 10:72)

أُمِرت أَنْ أَكُونَ مِن الْمسلِمِ

The word "المسلم" (al-muslimeen) is plural for "one who submits". This word derives from the root word "سلم" (*Silm*). The word "Islam" also derives from the same root. The root word contains a number of meanings some of which are:

- Submission, Surrendering, or Delivering Oneself (to God's Will)
- Peace
- Reconciliation
- Self-Resignation
- Saved
- Security
- Complete, Whole
- Restored
- Purity
  - Physically
  - Mentally
  - Morally
  - Spiritually
- Al-Islam (Islama), Submission to God

The Aramaic equivalent is "ܫܠܡ" (*shlam*). This word also contains many meanings such as:

- Come to an end
- Concluded
- Finished
- Completed
- Fulfilled
  - As a tale
  - Number
  - Measure
  - Time
  - Prophecy
- Obey
- To Follow
- To Yield
- Surrender
- Whole
- Entire
- Give up
- Deliver
- To become a Moslem

The Muslim tries his/her best to imitate these beloved prophets as we all should. Therefore, we are trying to be like them, as Jesus (ﷺ) states in Luke 6:40.

The word Muslim is not a new word found only in the Qur'an. This is only the Arabic rendering. This word also exists in Aramaic and Hebrew as well, which we will look at later. Due to the very nature of it's meaning "One who submits"; we find that this action has always been exemplified to the utmost in every prophet's character. Since this article is based on Luke 6:40, we will primarily focus on Jesus (ﷺ). You will find a very important example of Jesus (ﷺ) demonstrating total submission to his Creator is during his last moments:

And Jesus cried out with a loud voice saying, 'my Father, in your hands I commend my soul', after he said this, it was ended. (Luke: 23:46)	ܘܩܥܐ ܝܫܘܥ ܒܩܠܐ ܪܡܐ ܘܐܡܪ. ܐܒܝ. ܒܐܝܕܝܟ ܣܐܡ ܐܢܐ ܪܘܚܝ. ܗܕܐ ܐܡܪ. ܘܫܠܡ܀

Note that in the above reference, you will read in versions such as the KJV and the like the following:

> Luke 23:46 "And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost."

To use the words "spirit" and "ghost" is attempting to tie it into the Trinity. The word "ܪܘܚ" (*rooh*) in Aramaic has many meanings such as spirit, soul, wind, etc., but it mainly refers to the soul as in the above verse. However, there is no mention of 'ghost' in the last part of the verse.

Another fine example of his submission is:

When vinegar was given to Jesus, he said, 'It is finished': and he bowed his head, and surrendered his soul. (John 19:30)	ܟܕ ܕܝܢ ܫܩܠ ܗܘ ܚܠܐ ܝܫܘܥ: ܗܐ ܡܫܠܡ. ܘܐܪܟܢ ܪܝܫܗ. ܘܐܫܠܡ ܪܘܚܗ܀

Again, I would like to comment on this verse because we get a different meaning from the KJV.

> John 19:30 "When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost."

To say that he 'gave up the ghost' is very misleading. I would like to point out a grammatical analysis on this verse. The last part of the verse states "ܘܐܫܠܡ ܪܘܚܗ" (*wa shlem rooḥeh*). Again, the word "ܪܘܚ" means "soul", however, in this case, it is "ܪܘܚܗ" (*rooheh*). If you notice, there is a "ܗ" (*h*) at the end signifying "his". Therefore, the correct translation of "ܪܘܚܗ" is "his soul". Many English Bibles, such as the KJV attempt to mislead once again by removing the possessive pronoun which is clearly present in the original language.

To continue, in regards to his mission, he demonstrates that he has completed his work as commanded by Allah (ﷻ) leaving nothing undone which also shows that he was a true Muslim (one who submits), a characteristic which only fits the character of a prophet.

I have glorified You on the earth: and the work that you have given me to do, I have finished it. (John 17:4)	ܐܢܐ ܫܒܚܬܟ ܒܐܪܥܐ. ܥܒܕܐ ܗܘ ܕܝܗܒܬ ܠܝ ܕܐܥܒܕ. ܫܠܡܬܗ.

Finally, before Jesus (عليه السلام) departs from this Earth, he leaves behind something which can only be understood if read in his native tongue, Aramaic. In John 14:27, we read:

Peace I leave with you, my (way of) peace I give unto you.	ܫܠܡܐ ܫܒܩ ܐܢܐ ܠܟܘܢ. ܫܠܡܐ ܕܝܠܝ ܝܗܒ ܐܢܐ ܠܟܘܢ

Shlama shabaq ana lakoon, Shlama deelee yaheb ana lakoon

Jesus (عليه السلام) seems to have established a way of life here, basically to surrender oneself to God. He tells his people that he gives them "ܫܠܡܐ" (*shlama*), but *his own* way of "ܫܠܡܐ". What does this exactly mean? If you read further into the verse, he continues and says, "*not as the world gives it to you, but only as I give it to you*". What was the real need to say this? He's trying to reinforce the religion he came with, the Christ-Like religion where total submission to God's Will exists, not what we see today where most of the teachings are derived from Paul.

There are two commentaries of the word "ܫܠܡܐ" in this verse which I came across that I would like to present. One of the comments comes from an Assyrian Bible scholar

whose native language was Aramaic, and the other is from a Bishop from the Church of the East. They say:

"*Tranquility, that Peace which is under and in accordance to God's Will.*" (Enlightenment From Aramaic, Selected Passages From The Khaboris Manuscript, by Sadook De Mar Shimun, *Archdeacon*)

"*…the Peace which caused them to surrender themselves to God…*" (New Testament Light, George M. Lamsa, Copyright © 1968 by Nina Shabaz, page 141)

Having said this, I would like to compare this to what Allah (ﷻ) says in the Qur'an. He says in Qur'an 5:3:

This day I have completed for you your religion, and have perfected my favour upon you, and have chosen for you Al-Islam for your religion.	اليوم أكملت لكم دينكم و أتممت عليكم نعمتي و رضيت لكم الاسلام دينا

What we get from this is that God Himself has chosen Islam as the religion for mankind. What I mean by "religion" in this case is "Way of Life", Islam is a natural way of life. The adherents of Islam were not the ones who decided on this name. When we think of Islam, we see that the very nature of its meaning, surrendering or submitting to God's Will, has always existed since the creation of the universe.

Something else to strongly think about is the fact that Islam does not trace back to a particular individual such as in Christianity (traces back to Jesus), Judaism (traces back to Judah), Buddhism (traces back to Buddha), etc. Islam is unique in this way. It does not trace back to any individual yet it applies to all of creation. You will not find a similar verse like this in any existing religious text other than the Qur'an.

Let's perform a grammatical analysis on these two words: "ܫܠܳܡܳܐ" (*shlama*) and "الإسلام" (*Al-Islama*). In Aramaic grammar, in order to make something definite, you would place the letter "ܐ" (Alef) at the end of the word, whereas in Arabic, you would place "ال" (Alif and Lam, pronounced *Al*) at the beginning of the word. In both cases, these words are in their definite state. Both are derived from the same root words "سلم" & "ܫܠܡ", both bear the same meaning, and both render the same message in the output of these verses: "Peace and Submission to God's Will". This is why individuals like George Lamsa and Archdeacon Sadook De Mar Shimun, have offered such strong comments on this word. The difference here is the fact that they made no comparison to the meaning of the word "Islam".

God has mentioned this religion by name in other areas of the Qur'an to which again, verses like this are only found in the Qur'an. See the following references:

Qur'an 3:19 Verily, the religion with Allah is Al-Islam	إنّ الدّين عند اللّه الاسلام
Qu'an 6:125 Whoever Allah wishes to guide, He opens his breast to Al-Islam	فمن يرد اللّه أن يهديه يشرح صدره للإسلام

Since the adherents of Islam are called "مسلِم" (*Muslim*); coming from the same root word "سلم", we already know that this word means "One who surrenders" to God's Will. We also know that every prophet was regarded as "Muslim" because they have totally surrendered themselves to God. Remember what George Lamsa said in regards to John 14:27:

"*…the Peace which caused them to surrender themselves to God…*" (New Testament Light, George M. Lamsa, Copyright © 1968 by Nina Shabaz, page 141)

Now that we have developed a strong foundation of understanding of what the word "ܫܠܡܐ" (*shlama*) means, let's look at Luke 6:40 more in depth and understand what Jesus (عليه السلام) meant when he said we have to be "Perfect" in order to be like him. He says:

The disciple is not above his teacher: but every one that is perfect shall be as his teacher.	אֵין תַּלְמִיד נַעֲלֶה עַל רַבּוֹ; שֶׁכֵּן כָּל אָדָם שֶׁמֻּשְׁלָם יִהְיֶה כְּרַבּוֹ.

Ein talmeed na'aleh 'al rabbo; sheken kal adam she'Mushlam yihyeh k'rabbo

The words "כָּל אָדָם" (kal adam) means "all people; all of mankind, every human being". Therefore, this is a direct teaching telling his people that in order to be like him, you have to be "Mushlam" like he was. The word "Mushlam" is also derived from the same root word as Muslim, Islam, Salaam, Shalom, etc.. Let's go further into the meaning of this word by looking at 3 different sources:

Oraham's Dictionary of the Stabilized and Enriched Assyrian Language and English, by Alexander Joseph Oraham, 1941

ܡܫܠܘܡܐ (Mashloome) = Convert; to change or turn from one belief or creed to another; to accept, or be converted to Moslemism.

ܡܫܠܡܢܐ (Mishlmana) = Moslem; a Mussulman; an Orthodox Mohammedan.

قاموس سريا ـ عر

Syriac-English / Syriac-Arabic Dictionary, by Louis Costaz, 1986 Beirut

ܡܫܰܠܡܳܢܳܐ (Mishalmana) = Perfect; complete

ספר מלים

Dictionary of the Targumim, Talmud, Midrashic Lit

משלם (Mishlam): Completion; End

So from three different sources, we get similar meanings. Of course, these are just words – depending on how you use them in sentences may generate a different meaning. One example of this is during the Holocaust, any Jew who was facing the end of his or her physical and psychological resources and was willing to die due to the unbearable torture was considered a "Musulman" even though they were a Jew and not a Muslim in the religious sense of the word, simply because he/she "Gave Up" or "Surrendered".

It doesn't stop here; there are certain characteristics of a Muslim. Some of the main characteristics for example are: they worship only Allah (ﷻ) and prostrate to Him. As for worshipping Allah (ﷻ), we read in the Bible, in the first book, the first chapter, the first verse, Genesis 1:1:

In the beginning, Allah created the heavens and the earth.	ܒܪܫܝܬ ܒܪܐ ܐܠܗܐ ܝܬ ܫܡܝܐ ܘܝܬ ܐܪܥܐ

Brasheet bara Allaha eet shmaya wa eet ar'a

This is Aramaic, not Arabic, and we see that Allah (ﷻ) was the originator of creation. He was mentioned since the very beginning of scripture. Allah (ﷻ) has also declared himself in Isaiah 46:9 that he is Allah (ﷻ) and there's no one else.

Remember the former things of old: for I am Allah, and there is no other god; and there is none like me	ܐܬܕܟܪܘ ܩܰܕܡܳܝܳܬܐ ܕܡܢ ܥܠܡ ܕܐܢܐ ܐܢܐ ܐܠܗܐ. ܘܠܝܬ ܬܘܒ ܐܠܗ. ܘܠܝܬ ܐܟܘܬܝ.

Etdhikru qadmayta d'min 'alma d'ana na Allaha, wa layt toob ilah, wa layt akwatee

This can be compared to what Allah (ﷻ) says in the Qur'an:

There is none like unto Him (Qur'an 112:4)	ولَم يكُن له كُفُوا أحد

We can go further into the religion of Jesus (عليه السلام) and closely examine his teachings because they very much coincide with Islam. A Muslim will never argue against these beautiful lessons and as a Muslim myself, I have no trouble admitting that I follow these teachings from the New Testament. Jesus (عليه السلام) says in Mark 12:29:

And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord Allah, The Lord is One.	ܐܡܪ ܠܗ ܝܫܘܥ. ܩܕܡܝܐ ܡܢ ܟܠܗܘܢ ܦܘܩܕܢܐ. ܫܡܥ ܐܝܣܪܝܠ. ܡܪܝܐ ܐܠܗܢ ܡܪܝܐ ܚܕ ܗܘ

Amar leh Yashu', madmay min kullhoon puqdane, shma' Israyel, Marya Allahan, Marya Had hu

In fact, Jesus (عليه السلام) was such that he even rejected the idea of himself being called "good". Therefore, he quickly corrected the individual that approached him saying:

<u>Matthew 19:17</u>

Why do you call me good? There's none good except Allah The One	ܡܢܐ ܩܪܐ ܐܢܬ ܠܝ ܛܒܐ. ܠܝܬ ܛܒܐ ܐܠܐ ܐܢ ܚܕ ܐܠܗܐ

Mana qara anta lee Taba? Layt Taba illa en Had Allaha

He continues to instruct the individual on how to gain Paradise. This teaching does not include accepting Jesus (عليه السلام) as some sort of personal savior. Instead, the rules are simple and straight forward and refer back to the teachings of Moses (عليه السلام).

<u>Matthew 19:18</u>

But if thou wilt enter into (eternal) life (i.e. Paradise), keep the commandments.' He saith unto him, Which? Jesus said,

ܠܐ ܬܩܛܘܠ (la taqtool) Do not kill

ܘܠܐ ܬܓܘܪ	(wa la tajoor) and do not commit adultery
ܘܠܐ ܬܓܢܘܒ	(wa la tajnoob) and do not steal
ܘܠܐ ܬܣܗܕ ܣܗ̈ܕܘܬܐ ܫܘܩܪܐ	(wa la tashad sahadoot shooqra) and do not bear false witness

I want to focus on the word "ܣܗ̈ܕܘܬܐ" (sahadoot). This is plural for "ܣܗܕܐ" (sahada) and means to bear (true) witness. The Arabic equivalent is "**الشهادة**" (Shahaada). Therefore, part of the teachings of Jesus (عليه السلام) for attaining Paradise was to not bear false witness. In Islam, to bear proper witness is the very first pillar. In fact, his disciples made a supplication testifying of this in Qur'an 3:53:

Our Lord! we believe in what Thou hast revealed, and we follow the Messenger. then write us down among those who bear witness.	ربنا آمنا بِما أُنزلْت واتبعنا الرسولَ فَاكْتبنا مع الشاهِدِين

When they said "and we follow the Messenger", they were referring to Jesus (عليه السلام), however, take notice that they asked to be written as "الشاهِدِين" (shaahideen) which is plural for "**الشهادة**" (shahaada). Again, going back to what Jesus (عليه السلام) instructed: "ܘܠܐ ܬܣܗܕ ܣܗ̈ܕܘܬܐ ܫܘܩܪܐ" – "Do not bear false witness".

In any case, we can see that since the time of Abraham (عليه السلام), even before Christianity and Judaism, Allah (سبحانه وتعالى) has been worshipped and prostrated. A common practice observed only in Islam.

<u>Genesis 20:17</u>

And Abraham prayed to Allah	ܘܨܠܝ ܐܒܪܗܡ ܩܕܡ ܐܠܗܐ

Wa salee Abraham qadam Allaha

The second pillar of Islam is "**الصلاة**" (Salaah) which is the same word used in the Aramaic verse "ܨܠܝ" (salee). Here, the word means "(he) prayed".

Worshipping God has always been the most basic and fundamental teaching of all the prophets. It was strictly forbidden to worship any other being, object, entity, etc., accept for Allah (ﷻ). This was made very clear in many places throughout the Bible as well as the Qur'an. Jesus (عليه السلام) for example states in Matthew 4:10:

For it is written, worship the Lord Allah, and to him only service is due	ܟܬܝܒ ܓܝܪ. ܕܠܡܪܝܐ ܐܠܗܟ ܬܣܓܘܕ. ܘܠܗ ܒܠܚܘܕܘܗܝ ܬܦܠܘܚ܀

Kateeb geir dal'Marya Allahak tasjood, wa leh balhoodawhee tiflooh

In John 4:24, he continues to express the attributes of Allah (ﷻ) in terms of worshipping him. In other words, images of any kind representing God were forbidden. This teaching is found in first of the Ten Commandments. This fundamental teaching is in complete harmony with Islam.

For Allah is a Spirit: and they that worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth	ܪܘܚܐ ܗܘ ܓܝܪ ܐܠܗܐ. ܘܐܝܠܝܢ ܕܣܓܕܝܢ ܠܗ: ܒܪܘܚܐ ܘܒܫܪܪܐ ܘܠܐ ܕܢܣܓܕܘܢ

Rooha haw geir Allaha, waylein d'sajdeen leh, brooha wa bashrara wa le d'nesjedoon

In these verses, Jesus (عليه السلام) cannot be anymore clear than this. He not only talks about the high importance of worshipping God in Spirit and in Truth, but also talks about prostrating to Him. In Matthew 4:10 he uses "ܬܣܓܘܕ" (tasjood), and in John 4:24 he uses "ܣܓܕܝܢ" (sajdeen) and "ܢܣܓܕܘܢ" (nesjedoon). All of these are derived from the Aramaic root "ܣܓܕ". The meaning is:

ܣܓܕ = (Sejed): To prostrate oneself; bow down; adore; worship.

The Arabic equivalent is:

سجد = (Sajada): Prostrated himself; to be submissive; obeisance; to adore.

Prostrating was the common practice of worship for these prophets and those who followed them. Prostration is in fact the highest form of submission to Allah (ﷻ) and is

known to be the most favorable position to Allah; this is confirmed in the following references.

Genesis 17:3 "And Abram fell on his face: and God talked with him, saying…"

Joshua 5:14 "…And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and did worship…"

1 Samuel 20:41 "…(David) fell on his face to the ground, and bowed himself three times…"

Numbers 14:5 "…Moses and Aaron fell on their faces…"

1 Kings 18:39 "…they fell on their faces: and they said, The Lord, he is the God; the Lord, he is the God."

Matthew 26:39 "And he (Jesus) went a little further, and fell on his face, and prayed…"

In conclusion, there is much to be said about the true definition of a Muslim. In this article, I only touched on a few of them. One needs to study Islam and the life of Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) in depth in order to fully understand Islam and what a Muslim truly is.

We see that in the character of Jesus (عليه السلام) and the life he lead was that of a true, believing Muslim (Mushlam in his language). He completely trusted, obeyed, and prayed prostrating to his Creator, Allah (سبحانه وتعالى) as he himself testifies in Qur'an 3:51 which can also be compared to Matthew 4:10:

It is Allah Who is my Lord and your Lord; then worship Him. This is a Way that is straight.	إِن اللّه ربي وربكُم فَاعبدوه هـذَا صِراطٌ مستِقيم

My advice to everyone who reads this article is to make the effort to re-analyze the scriptures with much caution and accuracy and try not to depend so much on English translations. In my research, I found that much of the truth has unfortunately been lost during the translation process. Along with that truth, the knowledge, understanding and wisdom contained in the verses was also lost. We can regain this by searching deep within the text.

ربنا لاَ تزِغْ قُلُوبنا بعد إِذْ هديتنا وهب لَنا مِن لدنك رحمةً إِنك أَنت الْوهاب

Our Lord! Let not our hearts deviate now after Thou hast guided us, but grant us mercy from Thine own Presence; for Thou art the Grantor of bounties without measure. (Qur'an 3:8)